

✓ We attend Housing Training Session!!

4-159

DALE FARM HOUSING ASSOCIATION

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Dear Keith,

1) This is to let you know that yesterday (19 May), four of us "volunteer advocates", myself, Malcolm Tully, Zelder Jeffers and her sister Naomi, attended the two-hour training session set up and led by Susan Grist, the senior housing allocation officer at BDC.

They have prepared a Housing Options Application Form specially for Dale Farm residents and we went through this together. Three other BDC personnel attended, including Carla Vivekanandan, Project Leader For Dale Farm (who works with Dawn French). We'll get Minutes of the meeting later.

There were a number of questions in the Application Form which we questioned and I am sending you a copy of it today, so that you can advise us about any questions you may feel are unnecessary or even unwarranted - and could be left out.

Some they justified on the basis that it would help housing officers to detect Applicants who might have moved on to Dale Farm with the purpose of getting housed. We assured them this was not so - as everybody had to date turned down bricks-and-mortar.

We argued at length about people being judged intentionally homeless, and Sue Grist appeared to give some ground on the following points:

- a) a person under 18 at the time of leaving a house or legal caravan park could not now be judged intentionally homeless (agreed)
- b) an elderly person moving with their family group might have no say in the decision to leave a legal site, and could not stay behind because they needed carer
- c) being Travellers, a family may move onto a legal site or take a house but with no intention of this being permanent - just for couple of months, for the winter - before continuing to travel for economic reasons. I stressed the need to take Traveller culture into account.

Also that people might be missing the chance to have their case reviewed because the 21 day period allowed - simple because BDC letters were not received or that they had left DF before the letter arrived - going away travelling. The response was that this reasons would be considered and "reasonable extra time allowed."

2) I would like to hear what you make of Dawn French's letter of 13 April.
Where she says

"plot owners are required to fulfil all the requirements of the enforcement notices (though some have been annulled). Mobile homes and caravans can not be stored anywhere on the site (although the BDC stored vehicles there).

"Fences, diving walls, gardens and garden sheds are all unlawful developments (though gardens would appear to be lawful on greenbelt land and have not been challenged). Items not covered in notices will be removed and stored while compliance with the enforcement notices are [sic] sought."

We are seeking clarification on what items will be removed and stored and will if necessary draw up an inventory of such items (such as shrines, garden ornaments, garden sheds, kitchen units, ornamental gates etc). In the event of an eviction, monitors would have these inventories and see that bailiffs removed them properly for storage.

Do you see her letter (another copy with the hard copy of this letter) providing more grounds for a judicial review?

Is it right to think along the lines that in addition to the BDC having to take decisions about WHO, WHEN and WHERE, there is also WHAT their agents should remove and store (rather than destroy - in the past by burning)?

3) We have put forward Gardiners Lane South as vacant site with planning permission (for 3,500 homes). Do we need to go to the expense of putting in an Outline Planning Application (350 pound fee). Is drawing attention to this huge site enough to show that the BDC has land it could offer at least for five years (for the purpose of arguing in the County Court or High Court)?

4) We are pursuing meetings with the police re safety and human rights issues

Hope to talk to Assistant Chief Constable Derek Benson soon,
with list of safety rules which officers should ensure Constant obey.

Latest ECHO story is that the police have said they can't provide policing for a DF eviction until after the World Cup. Too busy.